

VZCZCXRO2046  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMO  
DE RUEHGB #1677/01 1412009  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 212009Z MAY 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4570  
INFO RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001677

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MALIKI MOVES QUICKLY TO ACTIVATE CABINET, FILL  
GAPS IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL CASEY

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Newly-elected Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki met the Ambassador and General Casey May 21 and outlined ambitious plans to jump-start his government and fill the security gaps in his cabinet. Maliki convened both the incoming and outgoing cabinets for a joint meeting May 21 to hand over portfolios and spell out priorities. Maliki told the Ambassador that he hoped to fill the interior, defense and national security affairs slots within two-three days, and he appeared to be narrowing in on candidates. Maliki said he wanted to make electricity a top deliverable and approved a plan to secure the path of electricity to Baghdad.

Maliki said he approved a letter from the Secretary to UNSG Kofi Annan regarding the international compact but hoped the U.S. would play a leading role in pushing it forward. Maliki planned a tougher approach to corruption and, when the Ambassador offered help, said he would propose steps in the coming days. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Newly-elected Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki met the Ambassador and General Casey May 21 and outlined ambitious efforts to jump-start his government and fill the security gaps in his cabinet:

-- THE HANDOVER: Maliki held his first cabinet meeting May 21 with former ministers in attendance to allow for a turnover of portfolios and the delineation of priorities. Maliki has officially taken up office in the prime minister's complex beside the interim government building.

-- PUTTING EMPHASIS ON SECURITY: Maliki said he wanted to fill the vacant interior, defense and state minister for national security affairs slots within two to three days. Maliki said he planned to meet with top police and army commanders promptly to outline the importance he plans to place on resolving security issues. General Casey plans to present a plan for securing Baghdad first at a May 25 meeting with the PM and other top security officials.

-- FILLING THE INTERIOR MINISTER SLOT: Maliki said he planned to meet with former Shia Arab General and dissident politician Tawfiq al-Yasiri later in the day, indicating that Yasiri is emerging as a leading candidate for the interior post. Yasiri told Poloff that he held a separate meeting with Jafari May 21 and is working to build trust with Sadrists and SCIRI leaders who still have concerns about his intentions.

-- FILLING THE DEFENSE MINISTER SLOT: Maliki appears focused on nominating Muhammad Bara Najib al-Rubaie, a former officer and son of Iraq's first official president after the 1958 coup that ended the monarchy. Sunni Arab leaders have expressed doubts about Rubaie. They warn he is potentially too weak for the job. We are contacting him to urge him to travel to Iraq from London immediately to make his case. The

Ambassador is also exploring other nominees with all sides.

-- FILLING THE NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS SLOT: The Ambassador plans to push Maliki to put the national security affairs state ministry in the hands of a trusted independent. With interior and defense clearly slated for Arabs and the Kurds likely to lose the chief of staff of the army position, the national security affairs post may mark the right perch for a trusted Kurdish leader.

-- URGING U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL COMPACT: Maliki said he approved the draft of a letter from the Secretary to UNSG Kofi Annan but believed that the U.N. could not itself capably lead the International Compact effort. He urged the U.S. to push on its own part to make the campaign succeed and the Ambassador pledged to do so.

-- A TOUGHER APPROACH ON CORRUPTION: The Ambassador asked Maliki what help the U.S. might provide in combating corruption in his administration, a persistent problem under PM Jafari. Maliki said he wanted to review the issue and the institutions currently in place to treat it as a top item of business. He said he would ask for help on the matter within a few days.

-- MAKING ELECTRICITY A TOP DELIVERABLE: Maliki has approved a plan to improve the delivery of electricity to Baghdad, including security on the Bayji-Baghdad corridor. Maliki noted the important role that outgoing Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi has had in coordinating energy issues. Maliki indicated he may bring Chalabi into his administration to continue similar work (Later in the day, Chalabi lobbied the Ambassador for him (Chalabi) to be appointed Minister of Interior).

BAGHDAD 00001677 002 OF 002

KHALILZAD